

# The Builder.

No. CCCLXXVI.

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1850.



ALTHOUGH the third part (text) issued by the Architectural Publication Society, for 1850, contains much interesting and valuable matter, it is not exactly what we hoped to see it. In saying this, we do not wish to throw any blame on the Committee: they have done their best with the materials at their command, and moreover have supplied the best of the materials. We say it simply to stimulate others, to enable them to avoid, in future parts, what may be considered a weakness in the present. Its contents are a Translation of Stanislas l'Eveillé's "Observations on Pediments," (with illustrations) by Mr. J. M. Lockyer; a Translation of Roriczer's Treatise on "The Ordination of Pinnacles and the Construction of Canopies," by Mr. Papworth, with notes, partly by the translator and partly by Mr. Griffith; a Translation of part of a Chapter of Vitruvius,—"The Elements of Designs," with observations, by Mr. Pocock; Fuller's Chapter "Of Building;" Gerbler on "The Three Chief Principles of Magnificent Building;" Norden's "Surveyor's Dialogue;" an Essay, under the head "Campanile," by Mr. l'Anson; and the first portion of a list of terms (carefully prepared by Mr. W. Papworth) proposed to be inserted in a Cyclopedia of Architecture.

Norden's "Dialogue," which might once have been "very profitable for all men to peruse," occupies thirty pages out of seventy-five, and had no business there, according to our view of the society's purpose. To get original matter, however, is a difficult matter. Architects will send their sketch books, but are not fond of writing; and, discovering this, the committee, we see, have advertised their willingness to pay for essays and papers on subjects connected with architecture.

Mr. l'Anson's essay is nicely illustrated, including an elevation and details of the Campanile of *S. Maria del Fiore*, at Florence, contributed by Mr. Donaldson, who, in the midst of absorbing occupations, can always find time to aid a good work.

In the course of the essay, the writer has the following remarks on the Campanile at Pisa:—

"This is usually called the "leaning tower," but this name does not convey a real notion of the bearing and form of the building. It is not a leaning tower, but a contorted or twisted tower. Like a tree, which, springing out of the shelving side of a rock, strives to become perpendicular, and bends its trunk by the force of vegetation,—so similarly have the architects, as they proceeded in the work, after the first sinking, endeavoured to right the building. The consequence has been, an irregular curvature in this great trunk, and an irregular connection of this irregular curvature with straight lines, which no perspective view can represent satisfactorily, and which could not be shown in a model, without the greatest attention and nicety.

This edifice is of marble, 177 feet 10 inches in height, circular on the plan, and surrounded by two hundred columns, having arches instead of an entablature over the capitals. Its great renown has been earned, not by its beauty of design, or rarity of material; but by a singular inclination of 15 feet out of the perpendicular. Whilst constructing it, the

architects were not careful to sufficiently secure, by piles, the foundation or ground-work; for before it was half completed, the walls gave way, which obliged them to strengthen the foundation on the inclining side with great promptitude. The clear lower diameter is 24 feet, and the thickness of the wall 13 feet 5 inches. The upper diameter is 25 feet 5 inches, and the thickness of the wall 9 feet. Almost all the towers of Pisa, as well as many level lines and supports of the cathedral,—also the Observatory, erected in 1755, incline towards the south, in the direction of the Anio, the soil there being the weakest.

The campanile not only leans, but has sunk down altogether into the ground. The foundations appear to have cut into a vein of quicksand; and it has sunk so much, that the base could not be seen, were it not for the excavation around it. Standing inside the tower, and before the open doorway, a singular optical delusion is produced: the inclined jambs of the doorway seem perpendicular, while the perpendicular columns and windows of the duomo, seen through, seem inclined."

Part I., for 1850, is contributed to by Messrs. Scoles, T. H. Lewis, Smirke, J. Davies, Fowler, jun., Bell, R. H. Sharpe, and Donaldson, and contains many suggestive examples; for instance, those under the head "Screen Wall."

Amongst the most recently published works touching our speciality is Mr. Inkersley's "Inquiry into the Chronological Succession of the Styles of Romanesque and Pointed Architecture in France,"\* the result of an architectural tour in France extending over five years. It consists chiefly of extracts from authorities having reference to the dates of various buildings (84 pages), and concise descriptions of some of the buildings referred to (227 pages), but is preceded by an essay on the Romanesque and Pointed Architecture in France (38 pages), containing his deductions from the facts collected. The object of the work is to define with greater exactitude than has hitherto been done the rise and duration of the Consecutive styles in France. The question of priority of France and England in the successive stages by which the progress of the art is marked, forms no part of his plan; but the writer's own deduction from the dates he has collected is,— "That the use of the Pointed arch in France (no matter whence derived, or by what necessity suggested), was an anticipation upon its adoption in England by a considerable period; that the confirmed First Pointed, or Early French style, likewise took precedence of the Early English, except, perhaps, in the province of Normandy; that the Geometrical Tracery, or Decorated style, was invented and brought to perfection by our neighbours half a century before our English builders began to imitate it; that this style, from the peculiar circumstances before alluded to, maintained its ground long after the appearance of the English Perpendicular style, which had attained its highest degree of splendour at a moment when French Flamboyant was but struggling into existence, whilst the latter, in its turn, still preserved itself pure and unmixed, at a time when the former had become utterly debased, corrupted, and disfigured."

In Normandy, the unmixed Romanesque style was persisted in some time after the adoption of the Pointed arch elsewhere. Mr. Inkersley has brought together a large number of dates and facts, which will be found of great service by succeeding writers.

In looking through some of his descriptions, we have been recalled to a recollection of many bright and pleasant days in our student-time, when with sketch-book under arm, note-book in pocket, and knapsack on back, we rambled

from one church to another (a steeple-chase without cruelty), earnestly striving after much more than we were able to achieve, and laying up, as we now find, most pleasant memories to fall back upon in more prosaic hours. We could get away from England in these times, without having the fear of employers or printers' boys before our eyes, and we counsel our young friends that much which they may with ease do in early life, by rightly using the opportunities presented, will be found difficult, if not impossible, when the world has put its ties about them.

To return, however, to books. Mr. E. Sharpe's work on the "Windows of the Decorated Style," now completed in two volumes, is a valuable addition to the library; not because it supplies a large number of good examples, which may be introduced without thought, by lazy and incompetent practitioners, into new buildings, but because, in the treatise which forms the second volume,\* the principles which guided the mediæval architects in their construction are ably investigated, and the various steps of progress are traced and fixed. We cordially recommend it for careful study.

When the work was commenced it was described, generally, as a collection of examples of the Decorated period, but the author has since seen that it is difficult and inconvenient, if not actually incorrect, to comprehend the whole of the tracery of the so-called "Decorated" period in one undivided class. Finding that they are divisible into two classes,—one in which the leading lines of the tracery are geometrical, and the other in which they are of flowing character,—he proposes, instead of following Rickman's division of traceried windows into two classes, "Decorated" and "Perpendicular," to name the three styles *Geometrical*, *Curvilinear*, and *Rectilinear*, and to allot the following periods to them:—*Geometrical*, 1245 to 1315; *Curvilinear*, 1315 to 1360; *Rectilinear*, 1360 to 1500.

We will only add to these notices, that the "Churches of the Middle Ages" has reached the Sixth Part, which contains illustrations of St. Mary's Chapel, Temple Balsall, Warwickshire; and St. Andrew's, Heckington, Lincolnshire. As we have said before, such works are not to be used as collections of doors, windows, fonts, and spires, ready to be applied wholesale, but as affording suggestions for new arrangements and fresh combinations.

## THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE DAY.†

UNDER the head of incompleteness, may be mentioned a defect which is probably more peculiar to the present day than any other. The greatest fault of many public buildings is, that all the architecture about them is the front, which is merely a decorated wall. The plea for this would be, the great expense of carrying the same degree of architectural character throughout. But is that, I would ask, a sufficient excuse for the sacrifice of the most important qualities of art? Where is the primary quality, unity? That must inevitably be sacrificed. The building is one thing—a substance,—the front is another—a superficies: it is a thin slice of architecture in front of a barn. Such are many dissenting chapels, and some churches. Now this is a great fault, and owes its origin to a very mistaken vanity. The sides can in general be as much seen as the front, and as we must judge of any building from all we see of it—from its *total ensemble*, it cannot possibly look respectable: nobody

\* "A Treatise on the Rise and Progress of Decorated Window Tracery in England." By E. Sharpe, M.A. London: John Van Vleet.

† See p. 126, ante.